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ABSTRACT

While most theories of educational administration hold that organizations work best when they mediate between organizational goals and individual needs, the two major observational methods of teacher evaluation emphasize respectively one or the other. The checklist or rating sheet method evaluates teachers against a uniform set of criteria, whereas clinical supervision focuses on the supervisor-teacher relationship. The anthropological field method, however, encompasses both of these dimensions, allowing insight into highly complex educational phenomena. This method is conducted in three stages. as follows: (1) the supervisor unobtrusively observes characteristics of the classroom setting and of the behaviors of teacher and students; (2) the supervisor then formulates, and verifies through further observation, propositions ("statements of relationship between two or more variables") regarding classroom behavior patterns; and (3) the supervisor holds a conference(s) with the teacher to evaluate the latter's performance and design an inservice training course based on the aforementioned propositions. Gaining a comprehensive view of classroom life, the supervisor can thus reconcile organizational goals with individual needs to improve teacher performance. (MCG)

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THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD METHOD OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND TEACHER EVALUATION

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Commonly used theories of educational administration are presented as being two dimensional: organizational and human. Clinical supervision and rating scales (two commonly used approaches to classroom observation) emphasize only one or the other of these dimensions in the teacher appraisal process. The anthropological field method of classroom observation is described as a three-step process of entry and data collection; proposition statement and verification; and conferencing and inservice. This methodology provides opportunities for the supervisor to transact effectively between the two organizational dimensions to improve the classroom performance of teachers.

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THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD METHOD OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND TEACHER EVALUATION

The appraisal of teaching performance has become an increasingly important aspect of supervision in recent years. Many state legislators have mandated teacher evaluation programs as part of the larger accountability movement in American education. This movement has attempted to guarantee student learning through such diverse means as competency testing of students, planning programming budgeting systems, performance-based teacher training, and zero-based budgeting. The relationship between teacher competence and student performance has long been assumed, although the body of research supporting the relationship has not been substantial.

The goal of educational supervision generally is acknowledged to be the improvement of instruction with resultant improvement in student performance. The major functions of supervision are: 1) curriculum; its development, coordination, evaluation, and improvement; 2) staffing; the selection, induction, training, and evaluation of personnel; and 3) instruction; the organization, provision of materials and facilities, and evaluation of teaching and learning. Classroom observation has long been considered an important part of the supervisor's teacher appraisal role. Current observational methods are generally subsumed under one of two major dimensions of organizational theory.

Administrative Theory

Most organizational theories or theories of educational administration, have two dimensions: the organizational and the human. The Getzels-Guba Model[1], for example, has a nomothetic dimension (the organization dimension) with an institution being defined by roles and role expectations. The idiographic (personal) dimension has the individual defined by personality and need-dispositions. This model posits conflicts between role and personality or between the goal achievement needs of the organization and the personality needs of the individual.

Halpin identified two major dimensions of leadership behavior: initiating structure and consideration:

> Initiating structure refers to the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and the members of the group, and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting the job done (the organizational dimension).
>
> Consideration refers to behavior indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between the leader and the members of the group (the personal dimension).[2]

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[1] For a full explanation of this theory see: Jacob W. Getzels, James M. Lipham, and Roald F. Campbell, Educational Administration as a Social Process, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[2] Cf.: Andrew W. Halpin "A Paradigm for Research on Administrative Behavior," in Roald F. Campbell and Russell T. Gregg, editors, Administrative Behavior in Education, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

The most effective leadership behavior is exhibited by those achieving both group achievement (initiating structure) and group maintenance (consideration).

Rensis Likert[3] theorizes an organizational continuum from System 1, Exploitative-Authoritative; to System 2, Benevolent-Authoritative; to System 3, Consultative; and finally to the ideal state, System 4, Participative Group. Again, the organizational and personal dimensions are implied. A System 1 organization places organizational goals as the primary concern with little consideration or involvement of individual workers in leadership, motivation, decision making, or goal setting. System 1 workers are controlled and exploited for goal attainment purposes. System 4 workers, on the other hand, are involved in leadership, decision making, goal setting, and are motivated by the work group.

McGregor's[4] Theory X states that management organizes the elements of production, directs workers, and rewards and punishes workers who are often considered lazy, irresponsible, and resistant to change. In his Theory Y, management organizes the elements of production; however, workers have the potential for

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[3]For a brief description of Likert's theory, see: Rensis Likert, "Likert's Sustem 4, Conversation...With Rensis Likert," Organizational Dynamics, (reprint series) (New York: American Management Association).

[4]See: Douglas McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise." Paper presented at the Fifth Anniversary Convention of the School of Industrial Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957.

development and the capacity for assuming responsibility, and management makes it possible for people to actualize on the job through providing workers with the opportunity for self-direction toward organizational ends. Theory X emphasizes the organizational dimension; Theory Y, the personal.

In each of these theories the assumption is made that the strongest leadership can be exerted and the organizational output maximized if congruence can be reached between the two organizational dimensions; that is, if supervisors can bring together organizational goals and human resources and needs; if the administrator can transact between the nomothetic and idiographic; if the leader can establish effective communications and control (initiate) while developing an environment of trust and respect (consideration); if the organization can move from controlling employees (System 1) to involving them in decision making and leadership (System 4); and if management can move from perceiving workers as lazy, resistent to change, and needing close direction (Theory X) to providing workers with opportunities to achieve their own personal goals while meeting organizational objectives (Theory Y).

Classroom Observation

Observation of the classroom--the interaction of teachers with students and students with students within the classroom environment--has been espoused as one of the most effective means of appraising teaching performance. (The other

major approach is the assessment of student performance.) Classroom observation has become an end unto itself in the eyes of many supervisors. Budgets, administrative staffing patterns, and school organizations have been contrived to increase administrative classroom observation time, as if there were sound research support for the proposition that as administrative classroom observation time increases, then teacher and student performance increase. For purposes of teacher appraisal, there have been two basic approaches to classroom observation: a checklist or rating sheet approach and a clinical approach.

The checklist or rating sheet approach is based on the organizational dimension of administrative theory. The rating sheet may be developed from job descriptions, research findings on teaching, lists of technical skills of teaching, or folklore. These classroom observation checklists used by evaluators often include personal characteristics (personal appearance, professionalism, and voice); classroom management; relations with pupils as indicated by discipline and rapport; and lesson planning and participation as shown by lesson presentation, lesson plans, and homework assignments. The technical skills of teaching may form the basis of a rating scale with establishing set, maintaining attending behavior, providing feedback, achieving closure, using reinforcement, repetition, questioning skills, and so forth, used as behaviors to be rated.

The use of these rating scales in the classroom observa-

tion aspect of teacher appraisal assumes that high ratings on listed criteria or attributes are correlated with the achievement of organizational goals, and, conversely, that the criteria receiving low ratings need to be improved. The use of rating sheets for classroom observation is primarily normative or nomothetic.

The basic premise of clinical supervision is idiographic. The primary focus is on the relationship between the supervisor and the teacher. As the supervisor goes through the basic five-step observation process (pre-observation conference with the teacher, observation, analysis, post-observation conference with the teacher, and analysis), the establishment of supervisor-teacher rapport and positive interpersonal relationships is important. Humanness, self-respect, relaxation, communication, contracts, agreements, collaboration, helpfulness, and therapeutics are all, at times, descriptors of the supervisor-teacher relationship in the clinical supervisory process. The clinical classroom observation process, often criticized and abandoned by practicing supervisors because it is time consuming, is one of building relationships between the individual supervisor and the individual teacher. This process is based on the supervisor's understanding of the teacher so that help can be provided the individual teacher. Clinical supervision emphasizes the teacher as an individual, the idiographic, the personal dimension of organizational behavior.

Checklists and rating sheets provide the supervisor with instruments that can be used to appraise or evaluate teacher performance and improve instruction in terms of present organizational goals and objectives. Clinical supervision provides the supervisor with a methodology that can provide sustenance to the individual teacher in the process of improving instruction. The anthropological field method of classroom observation provides the supervisor with a methodology that can effectively transact between the two theoretical dimensions--organizational and personal.

The Anthropological Field Method

In recent years there has been a growing, albeit small, minority of educational researchers who have rejected, in part, the traditional treatment/control approach in favor of an approach called variously ethnography, observational case studies, participant-observation studies, or anthropological field studies. This approach places one in the position of being an unobtrusive observer or a participant observer of some educational phenomenon. The scope of the study could be the functioning of a school board, a school and its operation, or a classroom. The analyst, after achieving entry, collects data (makes observations, takes notes, interviews, acquires information), analyzes the data, describes the phenomenon, and draws conclusions or makes inferences about the phenomenon. This approach draws heavily on the methods of anthropologists and sociologists. The strength of this approach

is that the observer can, within a limited setting, observe a great many variables and their interactions--variables the experimentalist could not begin to analyze or control. After continued observation and data collection, the observer generates hypotheses that can be tested with further observations and data collection. The data analysis, descriptive narrative, inferences, and interpretation can provide insights into educational phenomena and solutions to educational problems that previously may have appeared to be too complex.[5]

The anthropological field method can be a useful approach for the supervisor in the teacher evaluation process. The method is adapted for supervisory purposes into the following three-step process: entry and data collection, proposition statement and verification, and conferencing and inservice.

Entry and Data Collection

The anthropologist may attempt to study a social system or phenomena from an unbiased point of view--without hip pocket hypothesis or without a theoretical orientation. The supervisor does not have that tabula rasa. School goals, district

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[5] For a discussion of this research method, see: Louis M. Smith, "An Evolving Logic of Participant Observation; Educational Ethnography and Other Case Studies." In Lee S. Shulman, Editor, Review of Research in Education 6. Itasca, Illinois: Peacock, 1979.

philosophy, curricula scopes and sequences, parental expectations, union contracts, personal educational philosophies, and a myriad of other background biases are carried into the classroom by the supervisor.

The supervisor gains access to the classroom in the least obtrusive method possible. A note or comment by the supervisor setting a time, a teacher invitation, or a regulation requiring observations may all provide satisfactory reasons for supervisor access to the classroom. Pre-observation conferences may not be necessary. The supervisor enters the classroom as unobtrusively as possible, takes a position which provides the best access for viewing students, takes notes, and collects data on a variety of variables:

Space. A description of the physical space is helpful, the location of instructional materials, equipment, bulletin boards, and furniture.

People. The establishment of who is in the classroom (the numbers, sex, ages, physical description) and who enters and leaves.

Time. A running account of how time is used, the length of various activities, when events take place, their frequency and duration may be recorded.

Teacher Behavior. The physical appearance, psychological attitude, talk, movement, and demeanor of the teacher are recorded (verbatim quotes of the teacher are often recorded).

Student Behavior. The interactions of students are described, plotted, diagrammed, and patterns of verbal and nonverbal interaction and student productivity are noted.

The richness of the many methods of describing, recording, and measuring classroom behavior is available to the observer who becomes immersed in collecting a variety of data on life in the classroom--its educational, sociological and psychological fabric. This data collection period may, for the novice, take several hours or days. For the atypical class and atypical teacher it takes longer. For the unskilled observer it takes time to become objective, to record facts, to remove biases and opinions from field notes, to describe what the classroom is and what is happening there, and to develop competencies in specific data-gathering techniques.

Proposition Statement and Verification

As data are collected, the supervisor begins to sense patterns of behavior and interaction in the life of the classroom.

Relationships between and among people, space, materials and equipment come forth. Hunches about what makes the class work well or not so well come to mind. Data analysis may show relationships between time and activity or time and students. Ideas about a single student's impact on classroom discipline or about the effect of a repeated teacher behavior on a group of students are raised. The supervisor may become aware, through data analysis, of a "problem" or more precisely a dilemma in the classroom. Poor teacher planning, student boredom, a single student who is a discipline problem, poor ventilation, insufficient instructional materials or verbal criticism may all be identified as "problems." These hunches, ideas, dilemmas, and "problems" become the real essence of the anthropological methodology. They become the content for mini theories or theory statements: if X then Y.

A proposition is a statement of relationship between two or more variables. One of the variables is the determinant or independent variable; the other, the result or dependent variable.[6] Hypotheses are unverified propositions. Propositions must have at least two variables--though they may have more. The supervisor then translates these dissonances, "problems," dilemmas, hunches, or hypotheses into propositions.

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[6]For an excellent discussion of propositions, see: Hans Zetterberg, On Theory and Verification in Sociology. New York: Bedminster Press, 1965.

-- If the variety of instructional materials was increased, then attending time on the part of the students would increase.

-- As the nature of homework assignments becomes more specific, then homework grades might improve.

-- If the teacher use of silence increases, then teacher management activities would decrease.

-- As the time duration of classroom activity increases, then class time on task would increase.

-- As the time John is away from the group increases, then negative group attitudes might decrease and performance on tests increase.

With the statement of several propositions, the observer then attempts to verify each with continued observation and data gathering. Some combination of observation, short interviews with students, reviews of student tests, or surveys of work accomplished may be conducted. The task becomes one of verifying or refuting the propositions with the new data. Does the independent variable decrease under certain conditions? Is there a change at certain times in dependent variable "scores?" These data are then recorded and analyzed.

Conferencing and Inservice

If instruction is to improve, communication with the teacher must take place. The supervisor needs three types of

background preparation for this conference: knowledge of system goals and objectives (the organizational dimension); knowledge of the teacher's personality and psychological needs (the personal dimension); and accurate observational data with propositions and verifications; if possible. The suggested agenda for the conference follows:

1) Statements of Positive Value Judgements.

The supervisor reports to the teacher those observations made which are seen as meeting district, school, or departmental goals and objectives. This is a positive way to start a conference and to encourage corporate goal attainment.

2) Descriptive Narrative. The supervisor shares the happenings, the data of the observations, patterns of behavior, quotes, frequency counts, test scores, and other information with the teacher who is encouraged to "fill in" and contribute toward rounding out this narrative.

3) Statement of Proposition and Verification.

The supervisor states the propositions (perhaps only one variable is described), with the teacher contributing other variables or statements of relationships. Verificational data may also be presented. The purpose of this aspect of the conference is to achieve broad and accurate

understandings and agreements on the propositions.

4) Action Plan. The supervisor and teacher determine how change in the dependent variable of each proposition might be brought about. Generally, this is accomplished at subsequent meetings.

The major thrust of the conference is to bring into congruence the goals of the school or department and the needs of the individual teacher. Improvement in instruction comes about through supervisor sensitivity to teacher needs through the presentation of propositions with supporting data in such a way that the teacher will accept and find the observations useful in improving instruction.

The final stage of the process is that of inservice training. Statements or propositions clarify the individual training one needs since one-variable propositions ("improve your discipline" or "better planning") may not be acceptable supervisory directions. The supervisor then becomes responsible for assisting (training) the teacher in specific skills and techniques to improve performance.

A skilled supervisor with a sound knowledge of organizational goals and thorough understanding of individual teachers with a good repertoire of data gathering and observation skills frequently can complete the entire cycle, including a conference, in an hour. With teachers who have an important central problem in their teaching (for example, classroom

management or communications), a particular proposition can be developed and verified in a short period of time. Teachers whose personality needs are in harmony with organizational goals can be conferenced readily and easily. Other teachers may require several hours of observation. Teachers with particular personal needs may require considerable conferencing time.

In this article, a brief overview of administrative and organizational theories commonly used by educational administrators was initially presented. Each of these theories includes two dimensions: achieving organizational goals and objectives, on the one hand, and meeting the individual needs of workers, on the other. Educational supervisors have placed a high priority on classroom observation as a means of appraising or evaluating teachers--an important function of supervision--and ultimately of improving instruction. Supervisors who use rating scales, a common approach to teacher evaluation, are operating primarily on the organizational dimension, while other administrators, using clinical supervision, are emphasizing the personal or idiographic dimension of organizational theory. The anthropological field method was presented as an alternative to these two approaches. Utilizing this comprehensive method, adopted from anthropology and sociology, the supervisor gathers data, develops propositions, and verifies them during classroom observations. Supervisor-teacher conferences and individual inservice training designed to improve the dependent variable(s)

follow the observation. The advantage of the anthropological field method of classroom observation for the supervisor is that it requires a comprehensive view of classroom life. The supervisor develops hunches, generates ideas, and perceives problems about classroom phenomena. These are developed into propositions that, through conferencing and inservice, can improve the organizational effectiveness in instruction and the individual efficiency of classroom teachers.